

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION IN MASSACHUSETTS TOWNS



By

EDWARD T. DOWLING

BUREAU OF GOVERNMENT RESEARCH

University of Massachusetts
Amherst

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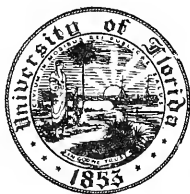
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**ADMINISTRATIVE
ORGANIZATION
in
MASSACHUSETTS
TOWNS**

EDWARD T. DOWLING

**Bureau of
Government Research**

1960

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BUREAU OF GOVERNMENT RESEARCH

The Bureau of Government Research is a research, training and service organization within the University of Massachusetts. It was established in January, 1956.

The functions of the Bureau are: (1) to conduct research in significant local and state governmental problems; (2) to provide research material in the social sciences for faculty and students; (3) to organize training institutes for public officials; (4) to furnish consultative services to governmental units; and (5) to serve as an information center for persons interested in public problems.

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Foreword

This booklet has been prepared for town officials, for town government study committees, and for those citizens who are interested in the administration of town government in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts towns have endured as unique forms of local government for over 300 years, and while they may significantly differ in geography, in population, and in numbers of elected and appointed officers, the town meeting, representative or general, persists as their traditional identifying mark. That this is no idle appraisal is apparent in the declaration of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court that "each qualified inhabitant of the town has an indisputable right to vote upon every question presented, as well as to discuss it, or there is no town meeting. This is universally understood as the vital feature of the town system of government as practiced from a long time before the Declaration of Independence until the present."

Massachusetts has fast become one of the most urbanized states in the union. Many towns have responded to this colossal challenge with measurable success. Through the representative town meeting device, permitted since 1926, the unwieldy sized general meetings were overcome, and through the adoption of new administrative techniques such as the town manager, executive secretary, or consolidated public works departments, the problems wrought by dense population have been ameliorated.

Admittedly there continues to be considerable reluctance on the part of some towns to accept the newer concepts. It is hoped that this publication along with the vexing political questions that confront them, might instill a desire for definitive action ere crisis and chaos are immediately upon them. Stagnation of thought is dangerous in any field of human endeavour—in government it is indefensible; thus it is that reasoned change and modification are essential if local government is to play a meaningful role in the promotion of the general welfare of the people within its sphere of influence.

Each of the 312 towns in the Commonwealth possesses a matchless personality; hence there is no single organizational framework that would fit the needs of all. Each will of necessity need to study itself and devise a structure of government that will equate practicality and economy with efficiency.

The Bureau of Government Research expresses its gratitude to the Harvard University Press and Robert J. Tilden for permission to quote from their publications.

Special thanks go to Mrs. Hazel J. Tilton who prepared this manuscript for publication.

Amherst, Massachusetts
December, 1960

WILLIAM G. O'HARE, JR.
Director

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If there is no worth while polity except one democratic in spirit, there is no vigorous democracy except one administratively effective. Wherefore the role of administration in government is commended as an abiding concern for all who would see democracy prevail.

Roscoe C. Martin
Grass Roots, 1957

Chapter I

BACKGROUND TO CHANGE

The image usually formed in the imagination of one hearing the words "Massachusetts town government" is a picture of a rural settlement with a white town hall staffed principally by a town clerk and numerous part-time boards, several colonial-style churches, abutting an elm-dotted common, a small commercial center where business is transacted on a first-name basis in a rather leisurely, friendly manner, and a long tradition of local participation in town affairs.

This picture would be a relatively accurate image of the 111 towns under 2,500 population in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It would not, however, truly represent the 83 towns with a population 10,000 or over. The significance of the latter figure lies in the fact that many Massachusetts towns not only have sizeable populations but are really urban communities and are performing the same municipal functions as cities do elsewhere. As a matter of fact, 20 of the 83 towns have populations over 20,000.

Obviously, towns with such populations have experienced major administrative problems in their attempts to provide the kind and level of services demanded by today's urban living. A form of government which was adequate and suitable for the needs of people twenty or twenty-five years ago has not been able to cope with today's municipal problems without extensive modification. Of course, no one form of government is necessarily better or worse than another. However, it can be said that one form of government more adequately meets the needs and wants of the people in a given situation than some other form. Different circumstances may require different governmental forms. Certainly, however, the basic governmental prescriptions for the ills of emerging urbanism have been and still are the professionalization of the work force and full-time government.¹ This is as true of the nation as it is of Massachusetts.

Forms which have served the needs of people for 200 years or more are not lightly cast aside, however. Rather, there is a natural desire to reshape, to recast these forms into a structure which will prove adequate for new challenges and new situations and yet preserve much of the time-honored traditions and customs.

Two earlier modifications in the traditional Massachusetts town governmental structure which illustrate this characteristic are the finance committee and the representative town meeting. Committees established to study the financial aspects of town government had been in existence for some time in such towns as Brookline, North Andover, Hudson, Saugus, Walpole, and Wellesley before the General Court made definite provision for them in 1910 when it provided that:

A town may by by-law provide for the appointment and duties of appropriation, advisory, or finance committees, who may consider any and all municipal questions for the purpose of making reports and recommendations to the town.²

In 1923, the establishment of a finance committee was made compulsory in towns whose valuation for the purpose of apportioning the state tax exceeded \$1,000,000.³

The finance committee, which is sometimes called a fiscal, advisory, budget, or appropriation committee, varies in size—from six to fifteen members—and has its duties and responsibilities enumerated in the by-laws of the town. Such committees usually are required to consider all questions of town finance pertaining to appropriations, expenditures, and indebtedness, to investigate the books, accounts, and records of town offices, and to report their findings in these matters to the town meeting. Its recommendations on articles in the warrant are published in advance of the town meeting.

The role of the finance committee cannot be underestimated since it has furnished a method of budget review and over-all financial analysis of a community's ability to pay for municipal services which was and is vitally necessary. Is it any wonder then that it—as a tool of town government—enjoys great prestige? Its recommendations are seriously studied, and only on rare occasions does a town act against its advice.⁴

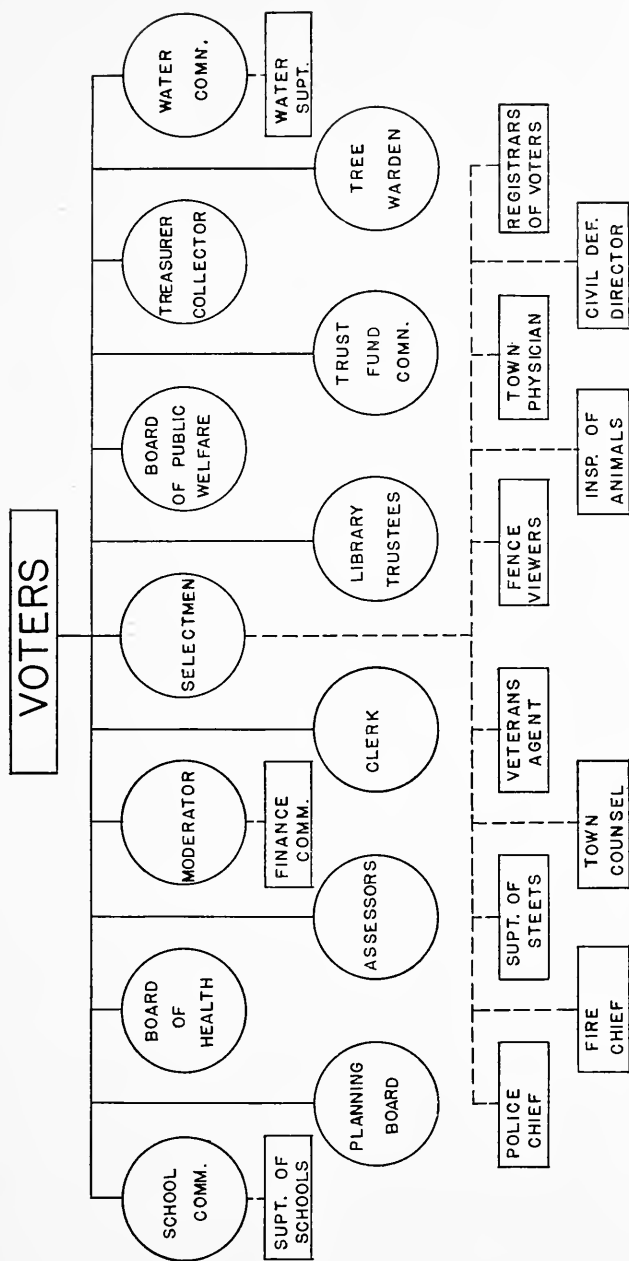
Just as the finance committee arose to cope with a budget-making process which had become increasingly complex with the growth of the larger towns, so, too, did the representative town meeting arise to remedy the shortcomings of the town's legislative body which had grown unwieldy in these same large towns. While the Massachusetts Constitution permitted towns to become cities whenever they reached a population of 12,000,⁵ the larger towns did not wish to abandon their traditional governmental structure. Thus, Brookline, with a population of 33,000, in 1915 petitioned the General Court for an "Act to Provide for Precinct Voting, Limited Town Meetings, Town Meeting Members, a Referendum, and an Annual Moderator."⁶ The act was subsequently accepted by the town at the general election on November 2, 1915. By 1920 Watertown, Arlington, and Winthrop also had representative meetings.

An amendment to the state constitution in 1926 extended the privilege of limited town meetings to towns of 6,000 people or more,⁷ and as 15 towns of more than 12,000 population had adopted the innovation up to that time, the change had received a fair trial. In the 34 years since the amendment, 26 additional towns have adopted this form for a total of 41 at the present time.

The phrase "representative town meeting" indicates a modification of the traditional town meeting in that representatives, ranging from 50 in Saugus to 372 in Fairhaven, are now elected in precincts for three year terms, with the terms arranged so that one-third of the members are elected each year. Any registered voter may speak at the town meeting, but only the representatives are permitted to vote. The representative town meeting can do anything an open meeting can except "commit the town to any measure affecting its municipal existence or substantially changing its form of government."⁸

The significance of these two developments lies in the fact that they are illustrative of the propensity of Massachusetts towns to make innovations in governmental institutions to fit new times and new situations in such a way that the desirable features of the old methods are preserved in the form of the new or different structures. Consequently, changes in Massachusetts town administrative techniques have followed this familiar pattern of modifying, altering, and otherwise reshaping the traditional town governmental structure to deal with the responsibilities imposed on it by mid-twentieth century living.

FIGURE I
TRADITIONAL TOWN ORGANIZATION CHART



TOWN MAY VOTE SELECTMEN TO ACT AS BOARDS OF HEALTH, WATER AND SEWERS, WELFARE, PLANNING, AND ASSESSORS.
CIRCLES INDICATE ELECTED OFFICIALS. DOTTED LINES INDICATE APPOINTED OFFICIALS.

The two predominant impressions one gets from a study of traditional Massachusetts town administrative structure are: (1) the lack of any clear-cut executive office which fulfills on a continuous basis the planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting functions; and (2) the independent nature of the many boards, commissions, and departments which are responsible directly and only to the town meeting. The reasons for this latter development are succinctly explained in a Public Administration Service report prepared for the Town of Braintree in 1959:

Historically, boards and commissions were not created to provide opportunities for greater participation in the administrative affairs of town government. They were usually designed to fulfill one of three purposes: to provide the easiest means for handling a new function of government, rather than altering the existing organizational pattern; to isolate a new function of government from "politics;" and to make use of a plural body because of a general distrust of the individual.⁹

In any event, regardless of the reasons for these features of Massachusetts town government, the basic administrative challenges created by them call for more effective utilization of personnel and equipment through organizational improvements, and the achieving of greater coordination and control of municipal operations by utilizing executive-type positions.

It is with these challenges in mind that some of the techniques are described which have been successfully used by Massachusetts towns to fit their respective governments to the needs of a highly urbanized society.

Chapter II

PUBLIC WORKS CONSOLIDATION

Although any discussion of consolidated public works departments is largely a matter of administrative techniques and organizational relationships, it is important in studying Massachusetts town administration to explore the history and development of municipal departments.

Activities which today we would immediately associate with the proper role of our local governments did not spring "full grown" in the early Massachusetts communities. Thus such activities as street construction and maintenance, water service, sewer service, refuse and garbage disposal, parks and recreation services, and cemetery care and maintenance were unknown to our communities for many years in most instances.

Historically, when the need for a particular job was recognized, the town meeting elected someone to do it, rather than give it to an existing official or board. If a job grew too big, or if an official showed signs of assuming undue importance, his duties might be divided and some of them given to another official or board. This pattern resulted in a large number of officials or boards, many of them elected, each with a limited area of duty, answerable only to the town meeting which was responsible for their creation and election.¹⁰

One obvious weakness in the erection of municipal departments by such a method is the apparent lack of any built-in means for securing coordination and cooperation between separate departments using similar equipment to perform related activities. In the years since 1900 this has become increasingly evident to those communities that provide by separate departments such services as streets, sewers, water, parks and recreation, cemeteries, and garbage and rubbish disposal.

Coincident with the growth of many communities was the necessity to increase the equipment and personnel in all town departments. Consequently, with more and more funds being allocated to the several departments dealing with public works, there was a natural desire to utilize as efficiently as possible the equipment and manpower available in these departments. The consolidation of those activities having an engineering aspect to them, which seems to be the essence of public works, into one department with several divisions was one method of dealing with the problem.

In 1920 the General Court gave legal sanction to the desire of any town to organize a department of public works by either of two procedures.¹¹ One provided that the selectmen act as a water and sewer board, water commissioners, water and municipal light commissioners, municipal light board, sewer commissioners, and park commissioners or that a superintendent of streets be appointed by them if 10% of the voters petitioned for this, and if the petition passed the town meeting. The other allowed the selectmen to appoint a superintendent of the water or sewer department, or they could designate the superintendent of streets to handle all three activities.

Under a more recent law,¹² a town may establish a board of public works consisting of three members. This board has all the powers and duties conferred and imposed upon road commissioners, surveyors of highways, and superintendents of streets, and those of water and park commissioners. It also takes over the functions of the cemetery and sewer commissioners, municipal light board, forestry department, tree warden, and moth superintendent.

Furthermore, the town may provide by by-law for the board to assume any other duty which is reasonably related to a board of public works. These duties may include the providing of engineering services, garbage and rubbish collection, and the maintenance and repair of town buildings and property.

The board is empowered to appoint a superintendent of public works to perform, under the supervision and direction of the board, the duties transferred to the board.

Massachusetts towns may petition for legislation in the General Court to give them "tailor-made" public works departments, as it were, to meet their own needs and desires. One town, Weymouth, by special act of the General Court in 1957, was permitted to establish a board of public works consisting of seven members.¹³ The act also limits the department to a sewer division, a water division, a street division (including refuse collection and drainage), an engineering division, a tree and moth division, and a park division (maintenance and construction only).

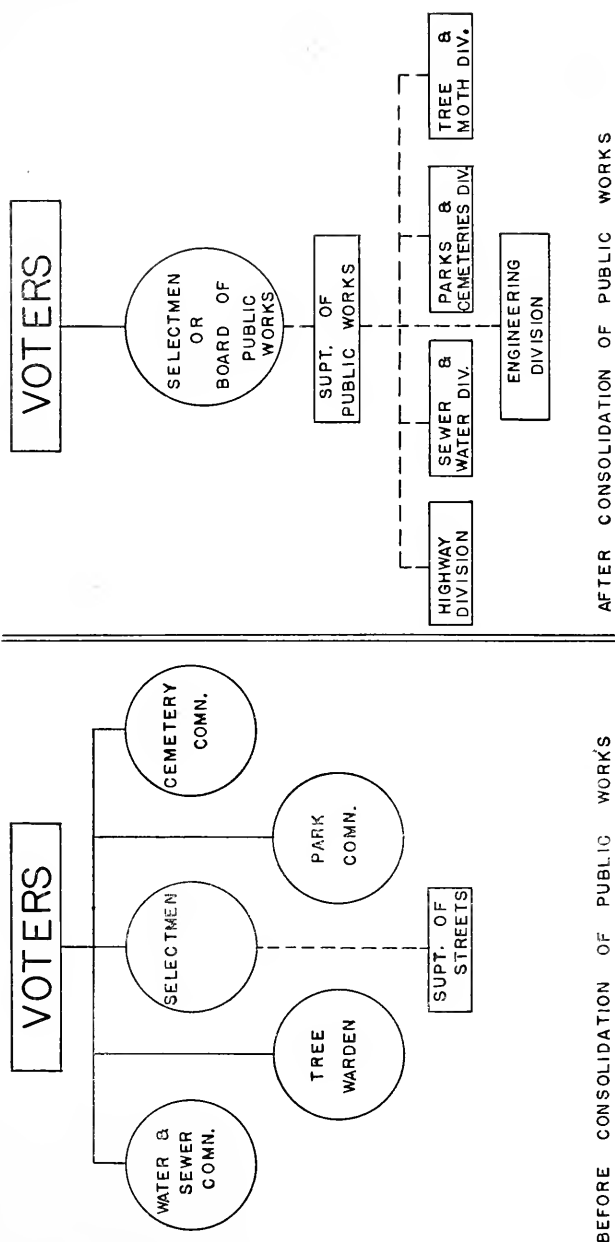
If a community resorts to the latter technique for establishing its department, considerable thought must be given to the organizational structure of the department. While there is no hard and fast rule determining the ideal public works organization, the best type of organization for a particular community will depend upon an analysis of the existing equipment and personnel currently engaged in public works activities on an independent basis, consideration of the physical layout of the town, its area and population, and the activities to be performed by the consolidated department.

It may be desirable, for instance, in order to create positions of enough importance and salary to attract competent personnel, to combine the operation of sewer, water and electrical utilities (if operated by the town) in a division of utilities. Another division might include all service activities such as refuse and garbage collection and disposal, streets, parks, and cemeteries, and a third division might include the engineering and construction work which would be handled by the town engineer.¹⁴

Towns having consolidated departments of public works usually have the aforementioned activities in their divisions; some are also charged with the responsibility for the care and maintenance of all town property (except schools), tree care and moth suppression, and the management of the town dump. Several communities have also combined the duties and responsibilities of the town engineer with the administrative functions of a director or superintendent of public works.

Undoubtedly, the most unusual example of such a union is the position of town engineer in Walpole. Town engineers or the engineering departments of towns are usually responsible for the design, layout, inspection and super-

FIGURE 2
CONSOLIDATED PUBLIC WORKS ORGANIZATION



vision of construction projects. They may also furnish engineering services to other town departments, commissions, or boards in the form of surveys, studies, maps, estimates, plans, specifications, and contract documents and supervisory control over construction projects. Under a special act of the legislature¹⁵ accepted by the citizens of Walpole in 1924 a town engineer, appointed by the selectmen, was made the administrative head of all town departments under the jurisdiction of the board of selectmen. Besides being responsible for the efficient administration of such typical public works activities as public building repairs, water service, sewer service, highways, parks, and the municipal garage, he is also administrator of the health department, purchasing agent for all town departments, except schools (but can purchase educational supplies upon request of the school committee), and local superintendent for the suppression of gypsy moths.

While the engineer's authority to organize, continue or discontinue divisions or departments as he or the selectmen determine as necessary for the efficient conduct of his office is typical of the usual responsibilities of a department head, certainly the provision providing that "he attend all regular meetings of the selectmen, and . . . recommend to the selectmen for adoption such measures requiring action by them or by the town as he may deem necessary or expedient"¹⁶ must be adjudged a duty not ordinarily assigned to superintendents of public works. In any event, the Town of Walpole has maintained this organizational structure since 1924 and employed the same town engineer for 27 years.

At the present time there are 41 towns in Massachusetts with consolidated public works departments (cf. Appendix C, Table 2). Since 1946 some 21 towns have introduced legislation pertaining to public works consolidation in the General Court (cf. Appendix D, Table 2). All of these bills have not been accepted by the voters of the various towns, but the fact that they were introduced is significant testimony of the interest being shown in this technique of town administration.

The Town of Athol is one of the more recent communities to establish a department of public works. That public works department integrated six independent agencies (highway, water, sewer, parks, cemetery, tree and moth) into the following four divisions: water and sewer, highway, parks and cemeteries, moth and tree. Some of the reasons advanced on behalf of the consolidated public works concept as stated in the superintendent's section of the Athol Town Report for 1958 were: (1) to obtain efficient operation by utilizing town employees' skills and town equipment on any of the town's projects; (2) by scheduling the work in the various divisions so that the maximum use of the town's equipment may be obtained; and (3) by the centralized purchasing of the materials used by all divisions.

It is essentially for these reasons or advantages that consolidated departments of public works are commended to the larger towns of Massachusetts. One might ask, however, what does the term "larger" connote? If we use the past experience of Massachusetts towns which have consolidated their public works activities we can better understand the term. Generally, towns have turned to consolidation when their populations have exceeded 6,000 and they have been providing sewer and water services to more than a majority of their residents as well as the more traditional care

and maintenance of town highways. When the town fathers notice the continuing need for engineering services and the recurring requests of highway, sewer, water, and parks departments for additional men and equipment, then a consolidated department of public works seems both logical and advantageous. Ordinarily there would be a more efficient utilization of men and equipment since the community's entire public works resources are at the command of one administrative officer. Coordination of work projects which had previously relied on informal communication and cooperation between independent department heads is guaranteed. Centralized purchasing of equipment and supplies as well as centralized processing of all paper work including combined billing for water and sewer services must be considered substantial gains.

Stoneham furnishes a fine example of one other facet of the consolidated public works department concept, namely, the role of the board of public works. Stoneham has had consolidated streets, sewers, and water services since 1913. In March, 1956, parks, tree, and cemetery activities were included in the department by special act of the General Court at the request of the town.

This town has a three member board of public works, each of whom is elected for a three-year term on a staggered basis. The board is the policy-making body on public works activities. That is, its legitimate domain involves the adopting of long-range plans, determining the priorities for major projects, and establishing capital outlay requirements. Theoretically, it should not interfere with the day-to-day operations of the department as they pertain to the methods of accomplishing scheduled projects, choice of men and materials, or priority of day-to-day construction and maintenance. These activities are the proper responsibility of the director or superintendent since they are matters of administration and not policy.

Stoneham is one community that understands this difference between policy and administration particularly well, perhaps because the department is a long established one. This judgment is supported by the fact that more than 90% of the complaints relating to public works are registered at the superintendent's office rather than through a board member or a selectman. Certainly the success of a consolidated public works department is related to the citizen's understanding of the roles of the board of public works and superintendent as well as the individual board member's understanding of his own proper role.

Chapter III

THE TOWN MANAGER PLAN

The development of the town manager method of administration in Massachusetts must be divided into two distinct periods based on the "weak manager" concept, stemming from the Norwood act of 1914, and the "strong manager" form created by the Saugus act of 1947. The towns of Norwood, Stoughton, Middleborough, Orange, and Mansfield fall under the first category, and the towns which have accepted town manager enabling legislation since 1947 come within the latter classification.¹⁷

While the origin of the council-manager plan is uncertain, Staunton, Virginia, is usually mentioned as the first community to utilize this form. In 1908, Staunton, by ordinance hired a "general manager" to serve as a full-time administrator under an old-fashioned weak-mayor and bicameral council system. The first mention of the plan in Massachusetts occurs in an article in the warrant for the 1913 town meeting in Norwood:

To see if the town will vote to appoint a committee to consider and report at a later town meeting upon the advisability of having an official known as a town manager or engineer, the scope of his duties and the necessary action required to secure and maintain such official or take any other action relative to said matter.¹⁸

A committee of seven was appointed and after due deliberation presented a report. It was felt that the town should place, as far as practicable, the responsibility and the commensurate authority for monetary expenditures in the person of a "Town Manager, Engineer, or Superintendent of Public Works." Since it was believed, however, that the existing form of government did not lend itself to such a project, the committee was enlarged and charged with the creation of a scheme of government that would be in harmony with the new office. The activities of this committee led subsequently to the adoption of the Norwood Town Manager Act of 1914.¹⁹

Although the adoption of this plan was indeed a major step for a Massachusetts community to take, by today's standards it illustrates weak manager administration. The special act concentrated more essential managerial authority in the selectmen than in the manager. Under the act, the moderator, five selectmen, five school committeemen, the town treasurer and collector, the finance committee, library trustees, the planning board, and the board of health were all elected.

Furthermore, the selectmen appointed the town clerk, town accountant, physician, fire chief, building inspector, scaler of weights and measures, forest and fire warden, fish and game warden, boards of assessors, public welfare and appeals, and the registrars of voters. The selectmen were given the powers of the board of public welfare, highway surveyors, water, sewer, and park commissioners, municipal light board, and tree warden. They fixed the salary of the manager, assessors, town clerk, and town accountant.

At this point the reader might well ask: "What does the manager do?" The "general manager," as he was called in the act, was the administrative head of all departments, whose activities were the statutory responsibility of the selectmen; consequently, he was "responsible for the efficient administration of all departments within the scope of his duties." Specifically,

however, he was to organize, continue or discontinue such divisions or departments from time to time as *may be determined by vote of the selectmen* or in the absence of such vote, as may be determined by the general manager. He had the power to appoint and remove all superintendents or chiefs of departments and all subordinate officers and employees in such departments and to fix their salaries and wages. He was to attend all selectmen meetings and give recommendations on the needs of the town. He prepared budgets for the departments under his control, was responsible for the maintenance of town buildings, and was the purchasing agent for all town departments except schools. Finally, he had control and supervision of the police department *subject to the direction of the selectmen*.

The special acts establishing town managers in Stoughton (1921),²⁰ Mansfield (1920),²¹ and Middleborough (1920)²² were essentially the same as the Norwood act. In Mansfield and Middleborough the finance committee was abolished and its duties transferred to the selectmen, while in Stoughton a five-man elected finance committee, which also acted as a planning board, received the budget estimates from the town manager. The town treasurer and the collector of taxes were elected in Middleborough and appointed by the manager in Mansfield. The selectmen, however, continued to exercise control over the major appointments as well as supervise the administration of departments ostensibly under the town manager.

Although it cannot be over-emphasized that this type of administration was a major change in the long history of Massachusetts town government, why must it be classified as a "weak manager" plan? The answer is to be found in analyses of the charters which seem to indicate that certain principles of public administration are being violated. In the first place, there were too many key administrative officials who were outside the control of the manager either because they were elected or appointed by the selectmen (i. e., assessors, fire chief, police chief, town counsel, town clerk and accountant, treasurer and collector, planning board, library trustees, and others). The list is actually so long one wonders just what that section referring to his power to appoint superintendents and subordinates really means.

Secondly, the phrase "subject to the direction and supervision of the selectmen," which was used in practically all sections dealing with the manager's powers and duties, tends to violate the separation which should exist between politics and administration — if the manager plan is to be successful. If "direction and supervision" are interpreted to mean interference in the day-to-day administration of municipal departments, then the authority and responsibility of the manager is irrevocably undermined. Apparently it was too early in the history of the plan for the cautious New Englander to put too much authority in the hands of some "outsider." Like all modifications in government, the changes that are involved in the adoption of a town manager charter are very slowly accepted by the general citizenry and it would be foolhardy, indeed, to expect any Massachusetts community to accept a strong manager charter at such an early date when the plan itself was relatively unknown and untested.

Full acceptance was given to the strong manager concept with the introduction of a town manager charter for Saugus²³ in the General Court in 1947; the bill subsequently passed and the citizens of Saugus ratified it

in 1948. What, however, makes the Saugus act a significant piece of legislation in the development of the town manager plan? The fact that it had been 17 years since Orange²⁴ had accepted the town manager method is important because it reopened consideration of the plan as one method of improving a town's management. Further, the Saugus bill tended to correct some of the shortcomings of the previous charters granted to Norwood, Stoughton, Mansfield, Middleborough, and Orange.

The town manager's power to appoint was extended to such positions as a planning board, a board of welfare, a board of health, a board of playground commissioners, a board of cemetery commissioners, a board of fire engineers, three qualified assessors, a town clerk, town treasurer, town collector, town accountant, a superintendent of public works, and a town counsel. The selectmen were limited to appointing members of the board of appeals, board of library trustees, election officers, registrars of voters, and the town manager. It is certainly fitting and proper that the selectmen have the appointing power over these boards since they are quasi-judicial and are not concerned with day-to-day administration.

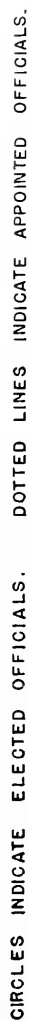
While the town manager in Saugus was given the same powers as are found in the earlier acts, he was also empowered to "supervise and direct the administration of all departments, commissions, boards, and offices, except the board of selectmen, school committee, board of appeals . . ." He was further authorized to reorganize, consolidate, or abolish those departments, commissions, and boards within his province, and he could also establish new departments, transfer duties, powers, and appropriations. Although it appears that too many boards still existed, it is obvious that the town manager established by this legislation was, indeed, the chief administrative officer of the town and had the authority commensurate with his responsibilities.

From the explanation of the two types of manager plans, the reader, who is cognizant of the place that the office of selectman has in Massachusetts town government, may think that this "ancient and honorable" position is being reduced to impotence under a strong manager charter. We shall endeavour to point out, however, that the role of the selectman is being redefined in the light of modern pressures on town government and upon the office of selectman in particular. The types of pressures, which have been overwhelming boards of selectmen in the larger Massachusetts towns in recent years, is given eloquent expression by the selectmen of Greenfield in the Annual Town Report for 1958:

By and large, the bulk of the work of the selectmen consists of participating each week in a series of hearings: this citizen wants a tree taken down that is blocking his driveway; another wants to have a sidewalk, a street light or a traffic signal installed, a street accepted, a parking meter taken out, or an article placed in the town warrant; an injured employee comes in to be heard on his claim for compensation; a department head comes in to be heard on his budget, a problem in reorganization, personnel or future planning. Unspectacular as these hearings might be to the public at large, to the individual concerned they are often of the most vital importance. There is no need to bore with statistics or details of these hearings of which literally hundreds take place each year. Let it suffice to say that in each and everyone of them your Selectmen—however hackneyed the expression might seem—do their level best to be sympathetic, non-partisan, impartial, and conscientious.²⁵

In the town manager system, the administrative detail described by the Greenfield selectmen is placed in the hands of the town manager thereby

FIGURE 3



freeing the selectmen for thorough study of the broad policy matters facing the town. Over and above the consideration of policy, however, is the responsibility the selectmen have for appraising the effectiveness of the manager's administration since he serves at their pleasure. Furthermore, they must maintain political leadership when issues relating to the town's administration threaten to entrap the manager in local politics. They still remain the town's "selected men" and can furnish invaluable assistance to a town manager by interpreting public opinion on issues, while at the same time bringing their experience and knowledge of a town's traditions and aspirations to the attention of the manager. Since Saugus accepted the manager plan in 1948, 22 (including the 1960 bills) towns have introduced enabling legislation in the General Court and the citizens of 12 of these towns have accepted it (cf. Appendix D. Table 1). The various acts parallel the duties and responsibilities established under the Saugus plan although there are certain modifications reflecting local situations and circumstances. The manager's power to appoint varies somewhat from town to town for the positions that he might fill in theory may be the responsibility of the electorate, selectmen, or moderator rather than his. Thus, in Shrewsbury the town clerk and town treasurer-collector are elected, the town accountant and town counsel are appointed by the selectmen, and the finance committee and the personnel board are appointed by the moderator.

Although the Andover enabling legislation²⁶ grants appointing authority to the manager for the positions of the town clerk, town treasurer, tax collector, board of health, board of public welfare, planning board, board of assessors, board of library trustees, and town counsel, he is required to make these appointments "subject to the approval of the selectmen."

Because the Town of Ipswich has two enabling acts (1949 and 1954) dealing with professional town management, the latter act calling for the establishment of a "town manager to be designated as executive secretary," a few words of explanation are in order. The 1949 statute²⁷ called for the office of a town manager with complete authority for supervising and directing the administration of all departments, commissions, and boards, except the board of selectmen, the school committee, trust fund commissioners, election officers, and the registrars of voters. His authority to reorganize, consolidate or abolish departments, boards, commissions, and offices under his direction and supervision and to create new departments and offices was singular. Further, the power to appoint the planning board, the board of public welfare, board of health, board of playground commissioners, board of cemetery commissioners, board of fire engineers, board of assessors, the town clerk, town treasurer, superintendent of public works, and the town counsel was vested entirely in the person of the town manager.

From 1950 to 1954 the town operated under this charter. However, in the course of these four years dissatisfaction with the aforementioned provisions of the enabling act brought about the submission of "remedial" legislation to the General Court in 1954. This act²⁸ was quickly approved by the state legislature and subsequently by the citizens of Ipswich. Besides stipulating that the town manager be called an "executive secretary," the legislation broadened the authority of the board of selectmen by charging them with the responsibility for "formulating a general policy for adminis-

tering the affairs of the town" and permitting them to "direct and advise the executive secretary in any matters pertaining to the duties of his office," as defined in the legislation. Other sections of the act dealing with the executive secretary's authority to supervise the administration of all departments, to reorganize, consolidate or abolish departments, and to appoint the various boards, commissions, and officials previously mentioned in the 1949 act, was limited by the requirement that all these actions were to be subject to "direction, advice, and approval by the board of selectmen."

Of the 13 towns with "strong manager" charters, Ipswich has been the only one to weaken the position of town manager.

At this point the question might well be asked what are the more common duties and responsibilities of a manager under the various charters? In summary, the manager is responsible for the efficient administration of all departments, boards, and commissions under his jurisdiction and to help him implement this charge he is given power to appoint, supervise, and remove department, board, and commission heads. He must oversee the enforcement of all laws and ordinances. He should make recommendations to the selectmen on such matters as he thinks desirable. He may reorganize, abolish, or consolidate departments, boards, and commissions under his direction. He must purchase all supplies, materials, and equipment with the usual statutory exception of books for schools. He is required to keep the selectmen advised of the financial condition of the town and its future needs. He must prepare and submit to the selectmen and finance committee his annual budget. Finally, he should keep the selectmen and indirectly the public informed concerning the operations of all aspects of the town's government.

Adherents of the manager plan can argue from the preceding enumeration that the plan provides for full-time professional administration of a town, that it does provide for needed coordination and control over the previously numerous independent departments, boards, and commissions, that it does provide for long-range physical and financial planning, that it does provide for increased efficiency and economy in the operation of a town's government, and that it does provide a greater opportunity for the selectmen to consider more fully the policy decisions in the light of research reports prepared for them by the manager.

What about the manager? What kind of a background can a town expect him to have? How much can a town expect to pay for his services? Ten of the seventeen managers currently employed by Massachusetts towns had been managers in other communities before they were hired for their present posts. The remaining seven had previously served as assistants to managers, had held other positions in local government, or had come from governmental research work. Five managers are products of the unique public management program conducted by the University of Maine while the others are from various schools with degrees in business, public administration, or engineering. The average period of time they have served their present community is $3\frac{1}{2}$ years and six of the seventeen have been in the same community for five or more years. This fact tends to refute the often-heard remark that managers are only interested in "getting a better job." Massachusetts town managers are presently being paid in the

salary range of between \$7,000 per year and \$16,500 per year depending on the number of years with the town and the community's size and ability to pay.

Although it is relatively easy to explain the town manager method of administration and to trace the historical development of the plan in Massachusetts, it is much more difficult but apparently necessary to explore the psychological impact of the town manager concept on the New Englander. It is contended by some that even his title is unfortunate, for as Sly declared:

He might be called engineer, superintendent, or even supervisor with impunity, but *manager* shocks the political ethics of the New Englander—it gives an unnecessary emphasis to the gap between a cherished heritage of direct democracy and the loss of individuality that modern administrative efficiency is supposed to require.²⁹

Since Sly used the words "New Englander," one can immediately turn to the situation in Maine where the manager plan has been extremely successful as 132 communities in that state have managers.³⁰ However, for a variety of reasons the Maine development is unique in New England. The following are among the several factors involved: (1) the existence of enabling legislation permitting the plan; (2) the lack of intense local party politics; (3) the increasingly apparent necessity for trained municipal manpower; (4) the economic appeal of the manager plan attracted the frugal Maine rural citizenry; (5) the generally good record Portland maintained under managers since 1923; (6) the national publicity given to savings effected by Maine managers after World War II; and (7) the establishment of the public management program at the University of Maine thereby furnishing a ready supply of trained personnel for communities interested in the manager plan. No other New England state has had as many factors creating the milieu necessary for the establishment of the manager plan as has Maine.

In any event, that there seems to be practically a natural antipathy toward the town manager concept in Massachusetts is usually acknowledged by every committee established to study the plan. However, upon closer analysis the "reasons" why people object to the manager plan seem to involve misconceptions about it rather than anything else. One frequent objection is the claim that the plan is undemocratic. Proponents of the plan in Amherst in 1953-54 answered this objection by pointing out that the voters elect both the board of selectmen and 215 representative town meeting members; that the town meeting has the final say on all policy matters and also on all appropriations; and that the selectmen appoint, supervise, and may remove the town manager at anytime.

From the earliest days of the plan in Massachusetts, there has been a belief that it tended to induce an apathy or lethargy among the voters. Thus, Mr. H. A. Whiting, Town Treasurer of Walpole, in explaining the Walpole Town engineer plan (cf. Chapter II) stated that:

We believe there is one serious drawback to the town manager plan. While it centralizes government and concentrates responsibility, it encourages the tendency to "let George do it!" The voters get the idea that at last they can lay down the reins and let the town run itself. Now we believe this is the wrong idea. We think there is strength in the town-meeting form of government up to a point where the size of the town prevents it, and it has been our purpose to retain it in its essential features.³¹

The facts, however, seem to indicate that particular issues determine the interest shown in town meeting for any one year. To use the Town of Amherst again, the representative town meeting attendance records for the five years preceding the adoption of the plan in 1954 showed a steady decline: 93 %, 90 %, 84 %, 84 %, 83 %, and 78 %. Since the appointment of the manager the attendance percentage has been: 82 %, 79 %, 85 %, 83 %, and 86 % in 1959.³²

The primary strength of the manager plan is the unification of powers in the town meeting and the selectmen rather than their piecemeal distribution among several boards, departments, and commissions. There is no real danger to democratic government from the town manager system, as the elected selectmen alone make the final decisions, and must stand or fall on these decisions. As for the town manager, he continues to occupy the uneasy role of serving solely at the pleasure of the selectmen. This is as it should be; for as long as elected men finally determine policy, take full responsibility for it, and retain the power of dismissal over the professional administrator, the cause of Massachusetts town government is adequately secure.

Chapter IV

SELECTMEN-EXECUTIVE SECRETARY APPROACH

The evolution of the office of executive secretary to the board of selectmen is a relatively new development in the administrative history of Massachusetts town government. While Brookline is usually considered to be the first town with an executive secretary, the duties and responsibilities which have come to be associated with the office were being performed in Wellesley by the Director of Public Assistance who also served as clerk of the board of selectmen as early as 1941.

Because of the evolutionary nature of the position, it is difficult to pinpoint its origin. Brookline appears to be responsible for the name "executive secretary" since the town created the position in 1942 by simply appropriating funds for an "administrative agent." The latter term, however, provoked the charge that a town manager was being forced on the town by a subterfuge. Subsequently, the selectmen changed the name to executive secretary.

In Wellesley, however, the person who became the executive secretary in 1948 was hired by the town in 1933 to administer, under the direction of the selectmen, the various federal, state, and town relief programs. During the period from 1933 to 1941 as Director of Public Assistance, he dealt with and represented practically every board, commission, and office in the town, gaining an intimate knowledge of the administration and operation of all segments of the town government. With his appointment to the position of clerk of the board of selectmen in 1941, his relationship with and knowledge of various town departments continued to increase.

To understand why such a development is possible, one needs only to reflect on the office of selectman itself as it has developed in more than three centuries.

For it seems that "the only way to describe what a selectman is and what he does is to recite his numerous duties and responsibilities, varied and unrelated though they may be."³³

It is only natural, then, for any full-time assistant to a Massachusetts board of selectmen to acquire an extensive knowledge of a town's various departments and governmental functions. The following is a partial list of these activities coming within the jurisdiction of the Wellesley selectmen in addition to their own office:

Accounting	Sealer of weights and measures
Auditing	Veterans' services
Building	Town insurance
Fire	Acceptance of streets
Traffic regulations	Assessment of betterments
Dog officer	Caucuses and town meetings
Police	Granting licenses and permits
Town hall	Appointment of officials

The executive secretary (formally designated as such in March, 1948) has become involved in all of these activities and functions to some extent. For example, he is present in the selectmen's office every business day, and

is engaged in such varied activities as the following: preparing the agenda for each weekly meeting of the board; handling all correspondence for the selectmen; receiving and carrying out decisions and instructions from them; coordinating the work of the several departments under the jurisdiction of the selectmen with other town departments and with state, county, or private agencies; providing the board with factual information upon which they make decisions and formulate policies; and receiving and adjusting complaints or making referrals to the proper governmental or private agency. Concurrently, he serves as Director of Public Assistance being responsible for the administration of the town's public assistance program. This latter activity not only involves administering the programs of general relief, old age assistance, aid to dependent children, and disability assistance, but also planning and preparing the welfare budgets and supervising expenditures, reviewing case records, and passing upon the recommendations of the social worker.

The preceding enumeration of duties and responsibilities pertains primarily to day-to-day operations. There are certain other duties of a more occasional nature performed by the executive secretary which add significantly to the over-all impact of the position on the town's administrative processes. In the financial area, the executive secretary prepares the annual budgets for and supervises the keeping of the ledger accounts of the following appropriations:

Selectmen	"Memorial and veterans days
Sealer of weights and measures	Non-contributory pensions
Town hall	Chapter 90 projects
Insurance	Town report
New street construction	Special appropriations
Special committees' expense fund	

Furthermore, he prepares requests for appropriations for special purposes or projects and assists in preparing and revising other departmental budgets including fire, police, building, and veterans services. Two other occasional or periodic duties are his activity in the preparation of the warrants for town meetings (annual and special), and the annual town report. The former includes the drafting of articles and motions, and the supervision of the printing and distribution of the warrants; the latter involves supervising the preparation, publication, and distribution of the annual town report.

In 1956 the General Court enacted permissive legislation³⁴ recognizing the position of executive secretary to the selectmen. The town gave serious consideration to the advisability of taking formal action under the statute, but it was the conclusion of the board of selectmen, town counsel, and the executive secretary that such action was unnecessary and inadvisable. It was felt that to spell out the duties and responsibilities of the position in a town meeting vote, or in a by-law, would in no way improve its effectiveness, but might impose unwarranted restrictions on the scope of the executive secretary's work.

In any event, the position is well established in Wellesley and the only question now relating to the office is when it will have to be set apart from the post of director of public assistance. An unusual aspect of this combining of the two positions is the fact that while the executive secretary is ap-

pointed annually by the board of selectmen and serves at their pleasure, the same individual acting in his capacity as public welfare director is required to be under civil service.³⁵

Whereas the development of the position in Wellesley had been very gradual and had filled the need for full-time executive and administrative direction before the need had reached particularly urgent proportions, the position of executive secretary in Brookline got a well deserved start from the Public Administration Service Report of 1940, which urged as its principal recommendation the appointment of a "chief administrative officer," and also from the original "specification" of the duties and responsibilities of the office. The town decided, however, to undertake an improvement in the administrative efficiency of the town departments through the cooperation of the existing boards and department heads rather than through the Public Administration Service recommendation of reorganizing the town's administration around a "chief administrative officer" — essentially a town manager. Brookline appointed in 1942 an executive secretary to the board of selectmen with the following duties: (1) to supervise the carrying out of the directions and policies of the board of selectmen; (2) to act as liaison officer between the board of selectmen and other boards and officials of the town; (3) to cooperate with the department heads in effecting coordinated purchases of various materials; and (4) to carry out such other administrative tasks as might from time to time be delegated to him by the board of selectmen. This action was taken by the town meeting appropriating funds for the position without the necessity for additional state legislation because no direct powers to carry out these duties or to effect the described results were assigned to the executive secretary.

While the establishment of the office of executive secretary experienced a certain resistance at the outset, with the passage of time the utility of the position was acknowledged.

Much necessary coordination and savings in time and effort particularly in the selectmen's office had been achieved. Nevertheless, the coordination committee established by action of the town meeting in 1951 and 1952 to study the town manager plan, were convinced that more authority should be given to the executive secretary to fulfill apparent needs for uniformity of purchasing, coordination in the maintenance and use of equipment, and fuller utilization of manpower. In this instance, however, the complexities of the organization of the town and the limitations of existing statutes were such that enabling legislation seemed necessary.²⁶ Consequently, the Coordination Study Committee submitted to the town meeting in 1952 a draft of a bill embodying the features listed below designed to materially strengthen the office of executive secretary. The executive secretary was:

1. Given authority to carry out policies and directives of the selectmen.
2. Authorized to make recommendations to the selectmen with regard to matters coming within their jurisdiction.
3. Authorized to inform himself regarding the responsibilities, activities, and expenditures of all departments whose head is appointed by the selectmen.

4. Authorized to advise such departments how coordination of their work and services can be best achieved.
5. Authorized to approve the appointment and promotion of all employees of departments under selectmen as well as authority to require permanent or temporary assignment or reassignment of any employee in these departments.
6. Authorized to supervise the maintenance and use of all machinery, equipment, and supplies of such departments and permitted to require the assignment or reassignment of any such machinery, equipment, or supplies between such departments.
7. Authorized to supervise the preparation of the annual requests for appropriations by such departments. Any requests disapproved by the executive secretary should not be included in the departmental estimate submitted to the selectmen.
8. Authorized to review appropriations for such departments and make recommendations pertaining thereto to the selectmen.

The significance of these proposals can be seen from the following list of town departments under the jurisdiction of the selectmen:

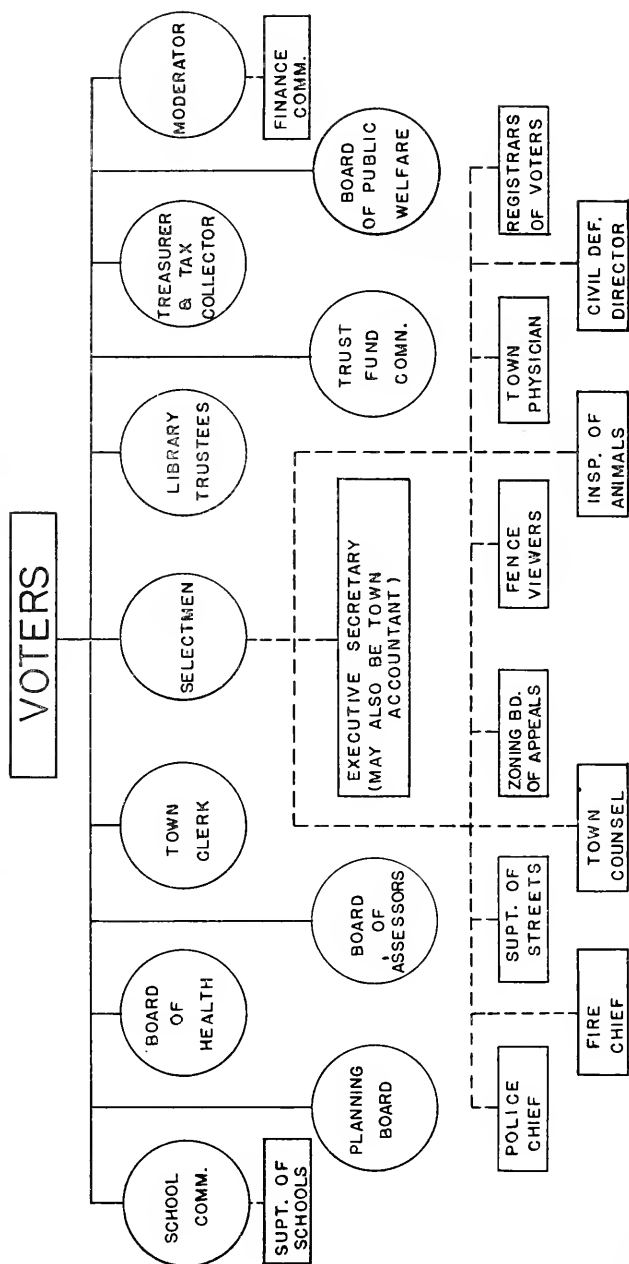
Building commission	Cemetery department
Comptroller	Heating and lighting plant
Town engineer	Recreation department
Highway department	Redevelopment authority
Fire department	Public health department
Public welfare department	Police department

The town meeting tabled these recommendations.

It is said that "time heals all wounds." That this does not seem to apply to organizational and administrative ills in government is evidenced by the town meeting's approval of a series of recommendations designed to strengthen the office of executive secretary made by another town manager study committee in 1958.

While the additional duties and responsibilities given to the executive secretary by the 1959 town meeting resemble the aforementioned duties and responsibilities contained in the 1952 legislation, they deserve reiteration. In the area of budgetary review, the executive secretary can now examine all the departmental budgets after they are presented to the selectmen. Further, he can participate in the preparation of the budgets of departments under the jurisdiction of the selectmen and familiarize himself with the bases for the budget proposals. He is also authorized to recommend to the selectmen any changes he deems desirable in these budgets and should make available to the advisory committee (which is the finance committee in Brookline) such recommendations and the reasons thereof. Regarding departments not under the jurisdiction of the selectmen, he is empowered to examine their budgets and, upon request of the advisory committee, make recommendations with respect to such budgets. Further, with respect to *all* departments, he is authorized to recommend to the appropriate authorities such changes in budgeting procedures as he deems advisable.

FIGURE 4
SELECTMEN-EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ORGANIZATION



THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY HAS DELEGATED DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITH THOSE DEPARTMENTS RESPONSIBLE TO THE SELECTMEN. HE HAS INFORMAL CONTACTS AND RELATIONSHIPS (INCLUDING DUTIES) WITH THE OTHER DEPARTMENTS OF THE TOWN.

CIRCLES INDICATE ELECTED OFFICIALS. DOTTED LINES INDICATE APPOINTED OFFICIALS.

The executive secretary's responsibilities in the area of coordination were strengthened by authorizing him to advise the selectmen, and those departments within their jurisdiction, on ways of achieving maximum efficiency and coordination. With respect to these departments, the executive secretary can take such administrative actions as are necessary to carry out the policies and directives of the selectmen. His activity as a liaison officer between these departments and other departments not falling within the selectmen's jurisdiction is reaffirmed. Finally, in order that the experiences of this officer be more widely available, he is required to report annually on the activities of the office.

It is practically self-evident that the positions of the executive secretary in Brookline and Wellesley have evolved through two decades into rather imposing administrative positions. The length of time necessary to reach this present acceptance on the part of both towns indicates particularly well the amount of difficulty full-time executive management has in being accepted by Massachusetts towns. The significance of the success of the development of the office in these two towns, however, lies in the role they have played as prototypes of an essentially new position in Massachusetts town administration.

The executive secretary of Brookline aided in drafting the enabling legislation passed by the General Court in 1956 providing that:

A town may by vote or by-law authorize and empower the selectmen to appoint an executive secretary who may be appointed by them for a term of one or three years and to remove him at their discretion . . . during the time that he holds office he shall hold no elective town office, but he may be appointed by the selectmen or with their approval, by any other town officer, board, committee, or commission, to any other town office or position consistent with his office . . . he shall act by and for the selectmen in any matter which they may assign to him relating to the administration of the affairs of the town or of any town office or department under their supervision and control, or, with the approval of the selectmen, may perform such other duties as may be requested of him by any other town officer, board, committee or commission.³⁷

The towns of Weston, Wayland, and Wakefield have accepted the act and combined the duties and responsibilities of the office with the statutory position of town accountant. In Weston and Wakefield the executive secretary-town accountant's administrative authority has developed from usage and gradual acceptance rather than any formal specification. Thus, while the selectmen in Weston called a meeting of all town officials to offer the services of the office immediately after it was created, relationships with independent boards and offices have developed in a variety of forms ranging from specific and continuing delegation of duties to an occasional request for assistance.³⁸

At one time or another, however, the executive secretary has been called upon to assist every independent board and officer in the community. As a matter of fact, assisting various boards, departments, and commissions is an activity performed by all executive secretaries. Other duties and responsibilities common to the office in these towns include managing the office of the selectmen within the policies laid down by them, serving as a clearing-house for citizen complaints and inquiries, participating in the budget-making process in cooperation with the finance committee and the various town departments, and liaison with all town departments with the avowed purpose of securing more coordination of town activities.

In Wayland, through action of the town meeting, the executive secretary is uniquely charged with the responsibility of supervising all the administrative and clerical activities and employees in the town hall. In Wakefield, the office is involved in the administration of a contributory retirement investment fund consisting of over 300 active members and 54 retired members at a cost of approximately \$80,000 annually to the town and a contributory retirement investment fund of approximately \$600,000 as well as the administration and negotiation of employees group accident-health and life insurance which involves approximately 450 employees at an annual cost of approximately \$70,000 of which \$35,000 is provided by the town and \$35,000 by employee contributions.

While it would be possible to continue to discuss the development of the office of executive secretary on a town-by-town basis, the various local situations leading to the creation of the position differ little from those that existed in Wellesley and Brookline. Consequently, detailed accounts of the duties and responsibilities of the executive secretaries are not essentially different from those of their associates in the towns previously considered. At this point, certain observations and comments about the office of executive secretary seem to be in order.

The position has evolved and developed to accomplish certain aims and desires of the citizens of these Massachusetts towns and to compensate for some of the weaknesses, from an administrative point of view, of the unusually large number of independent boards, commissions, and departments which characterize Massachusetts town administrative structure. In the absence of any true executive official, the office of selectman, with its conglomeration of duties and responsibilities acquired through three centuries of its existence, approaches the concept of an executive office better than any other office in a Massachusetts town. It seems only natural, then, to locate a full-time administrator and coordinator in an office which is administratively overburdened and has several other departments under its jurisdiction. There seems to be little doubt that this is the best location for such a position.

The fact that many duties of the executive secretary are delegated to him by the selectmen should not be underestimated, since his role can be substantially modified by changes in the board.

Duties and responsibilities conferred by the process of delegation rather than legislation can be rescinded in a variety of ways ranging from attrition to failure to reappoint. While the latter course may be farfetched because of the demonstrated utility of and confidence in the position, it must be remembered that the office of executive secretary relies on delegation of duties and responsibilities to a large extent.

Further, since his relationships with other independent boards, departments, and commissions are generally cooperative and voluntary, he must exercise great tact and diplomacy in dealing with them, and they, in turn, must realize that he is there to help them in the management of their offices. Perhaps, the student of human nature and public administration would say that such an arrangement depends too much on the good will of the participating parties to be really effective. While this may be true to a certain

extent, the citizens of these communities, having an executive secretary, consider not only administrative principles but also desire to preserve the basic town administrative structure which they feel lends itself to greater citizen participation than the more streamlined techniques of municipal organization. They would, therefore, question severely the thought expressed by Alexander Pope in his *Essay on Man*, to wit:

For forms of government let fools contest;
Whate'er is best administer'd is best.

The manner in which the position developed is significant because it illustrates the reluctance of Massachusetts towns to provide full-time executive type positions without first being thoroughly convinced of the efficacy of such posts. The fact that towns like Brookline, Wakefield, Wellesley, and Weston, among others, are convinced that the office of executive secretary is, indeed, a worthwhile and necessary adjunct to town administrative structure seems to indicate its further adoption by other communities.

Chapter V

EVALUATION AND SUMMARY

While the consolidated department of public works, the executive secretary to the board of selectmen, and the town manager plan have been considered separately, it ought not to be concluded that their simultaneous use is impossible or that they are the only techniques utilized by Massachusetts towns to improve administrative structure and management. Whether or not a community has a department of public works *and* a town manager, or executive secretary, may be observed in Appendix C.

There is no hard and fast rule, however, setting forth the method by which one technique is added to another. Wellesley adopted a department of public works after it had an executive secretary, while Wakefield did just the opposite. Some town manager enabling acts contain sections establishing a public works department under a director appointed by the manager (Saugus, Danvers, Concord), although here again there are some notable exceptions (Amherst, Shrewsbury, Williamstown). On the other hand, towns with consolidated public works departments have rarely added either a town manager or an executive secretary. This latter point may give substance to the often heard remark that the larger towns in Massachusetts need a good public works department more than anything else. In any event, the point to remember is that the existence of one of these administrative devices does not preclude the necessity nor the desirability of using others.

The aforementioned word "others" is not limited to the previously described techniques either from a theoretical view of public administration or from the facts as they relate to the methods which are being used by some Massachusetts towns to adjust their administrative machinery to local problems.

Certain towns on Cape Cod, for example, have boards of selectmen that are for all intents and purposes their own versions of full-time administrative officers. This particular phenomenon arises from the fact that the board of selectmen in most Cape Cod towns also act or perform the duties of assessors, boards of health, and boards of public welfare. One cannot generalize about this development since in the smaller towns the selectmen acting in these various capacities do not need to maintain daily office hours because the work load does not warrant it. In larger towns, however, like Falmouth, Yarmouth, and Wareham, the selectmen not only have regular working hours but even divide their responsibilities along lines similar to the commission form of city government. In all Cape Cod towns, the pressures on municipal departments for services increase substantially during the summer vacation season. The selectmen wearing their various "administrative hats" simply work harder during this period. This particular method of town administration seems to have worked well in the numerous circumstances which have led to its development. Again, it has been rather an evolutionary movement than a deliberately planned technique of town administration. Whether or not such a scheme could be successfully transferred or transplanted to other Massachusetts towns is a matter of conjecture.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has 83 towns with populations over 10,000, yet has only 17 towns with the town manager plan. Why is this true? This is a question often asked by students of Massachusetts local government, but one that cannot be answered categorically. There appear to be several factors peculiar to Massachusetts people and politics which tend to thwart widespread acceptance of the plan.

Certainly one of the more obvious of these is the fact that any local group advocating the plan must mount a sustained drive for approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. The following hypothetical case illustrates this point. Without a calamitous breakdown in municipal services the procedure usually takes the following form:

- March, 1945 —Article in warrant to study town government with particular emphasis on the town manager plan. Report to be presented at next annual town meeting.
- March, 1946 —Report on town government accepted and recommendations for the town manager plan voted affirmatively.
- December, 1946—Legislation drafted by the community submitted to the General Court for approval.
- June, 1947 —Town manager enabling legislation approved by the General Court and returned to the community.
- March, 1948 —Enabling legislation presented to the town for final acceptance. Legislation accepted. Manager to be appointed as soon as practicable.
- Fall, 1948 —Appointment of first town manager.

It is true that this $3\frac{1}{2}$ year period could be shortened somewhat by having the report favorably voted at a special town meeting as well as the final acceptance by the community after the General Court has approved the legislation, but this would be most unusual. The plan must have broad-based citizen support during this entire period, or else it surely will be scuttled somewhere along the line.

A possible solution to this lengthy process, however, might be the passage of model town manager acts embodying the best features of the various charters already on the books. This legislation would be of the permissive variety thereby allowing the community to vote the plan at town meeting.

The traditional arguments for the manager plan usually stress increased economy and efficiency, smoother, more competent day-to day administration, expert planning and execution of programs, departmental reorganization, and improved services. Even though these arguments are true more times than not, they seem to fall on deaf ears in Massachusetts.

While acknowledging that these attributes are worthy adjuncts to the administration of our larger towns, the citizens of these communities apparently feel that they would lose more in the way of general citizen interest in local affairs and citizen participation in the determination of public policy and its execution via the medium of the numerous committees—special and permanent—which characterize Massachusetts town government than they would gain under the manager plan. This attitude stems from a willingness to finance fractionated administration and to serve on the innumerable boards and commissions, and is further abetted by the independent character

of the public schools (which account for nearly 39 % of the expenditures in towns with populations in excess of 10,000³⁹). These factors increase the difficulties for proponents of the manager plan.

Not only have the aforementioned factors been important in the development of the town manager method of administration, but they have also contributed to the interest being shown in the executive secretary to the board of selectmen as an alternative to the manager plan. Since an executive secretary can be hired simply by the appropriation of funds for salary and expenses, this reduces considerably the time necessary to get a man on the job—a most appealing aspect of the position. Further, fear of declining citizen interest and participation in ameliorated because there is no abolition of committees, boards, or commissions. Finally, in the public mind the installation of an executive secretary, regardless of how wide his administrative authority extends, is viewed as a staff or auxiliary change rather than a basic change in government. This is not true, however, of the manager plan for people generally consider it to be a distinct form of government rather than a method of administration; consequently, those eager to preserve the more traditional character of town government will oppose the manager form on this basis as well as on other more legitimate grounds.

Attractive though the executive secretary position may be, it can accomplish only limited objectives. It can provide full-time professional administration in the office of the selectmen and varying degrees of direction to and control of departments under the jurisdiction of the selectmen. It can supply services to other independent departments, boards, or commissions—if they desire such services—but it cannot abolish, reorganize, or consolidate these departments, boards, or commissions. From a theoretical view of public administration it provides an opportunity for much useful executive or managerial service although laboring under some potentially serious handicaps. Certainly the fact that it has its duties and responsibilities determined and delegated by a three or five man board of selectmen—whose membership may be altered by a fickle electorate—rather than a charter or statute, must be considered less than an ideal situation. The prospect of the position fluctuating in prestige and responsibility as a result of varying concepts of its proper role by different boards of selectmen is a very real possibility. Further, because relationships with other independent segments of the town government are based almost entirely on the personal tact and diplomacy of the executive secretary plus a recognition of his competence, often grudgingly admitted after several years, the recruitment of a replacement and his acceptance by these departments, boards, and commissions may prove to be a greater than usual problem.

Implicit in this discussion of the executive secretary to the board of selectmen have been two important facts concerning the men who occupy these positions. They are: (1) the present executive secretaries have been for the most part life-long residents of their communities who have been the only persons to occupy the positions; (2) they have generally been employed or involved in some manner in town government prior to assuming their secretarial duties and responsibilities. These two considerations are important to the future of the position since upon the retirement of these men certain alternatives present themselves to the towns involved. Should the town recruit a new executive secretary from among the present employees of

the town or should it open up the quest for a replacement to a state or nationwide canvass of the talent trained and available for this type of work? On the other hand, because the position of executive secretary is so intertwined and identified with the personality of the occupants, the question may well arise as to whether a suitable replacement can be found. With this thorny possibility in mind, perhaps, a summary of the backgrounds of the present incumbents of the office of executive secretary would be beneficial.

These men have generally had their formal education in business and accounting rather than in engineering and public administration as was true of the town manager group. The executive secretaries have as a group, however, supplemented their education with special courses in public administration, law, and public finance. This latter point is significant since it seems to indicate that persons with public administration training and a knowledge of municipal law and finance could probably qualify for these positions.

At any rate, the position of executive secretary seems to have a future in Massachusetts town government for the next several years. It is interesting to speculate, however, as to whether it will serve as a halfway point in the further development of the town manager plan or whether both town managers and executive secretaries will fall by the wayside with the advent of some kind of metropolitan government.

For the immediate and foreseeable future, however, there appears little doubt that Massachusetts towns desiring methods to improve the coordination and control of municipal operations, the professional management of their administrative apparatus, the better utilization of men and equipment, and the advantages of increased planning and programming of services will continue to turn to the consolidated department of public works, the executive secretary to the board of selectmen, and the town manager plan for the achievement of these objectives.

APPENDIX A

REFERENCES

- ¹Benjamin Baker, *Urban Government*, D. Van Nostrand, New York, 1957, p. 121.
- ²General Laws, c. 39, s. 16.
- ³Acts of 1923, c. 388.
- ⁴John Sly, *Town Government in Massachusetts*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1930, p. 211.
- ⁵Constitution of Massachusetts, Amendments, Article II.
- ⁶Acts of 1915, c. 250.
- ⁷Constitution of Massachusetts, Amendments, Article LXX.
- ⁸For an excellent discussion of the development of the representative town meeting cf. John Sly, *Town Government in Massachusetts*, pp. 165-192.
- ⁹*Report on Braintree Town Administration*, Public Administration Service, Chicago, 1959, p. 14.
- ¹⁰Robert J. Tilden, "Town Government," *Boston University Law Review*, Volume XXXVIII, No. 3 (Summer, 1958), pp. 386-387.
- ¹¹General Laws, c. 41, ss. 21, 69.
- ¹²General Laws, c. 41, s. 69D.
- ¹³Acts of 1957, c. 56.
- ¹⁴*Municipal Public Works Administration*, International City Managers Association, Chicago, 1950, p. 286.
- ¹⁵Acts of 1924, c. 377.
- ¹⁶*Ibid.*, s. 9.
- ¹⁷Andover, Amherst, Arlington, Concord, Danvers, Holden, Provincetown, Saugus, Shrewsbury, Williamstown, Wilmington.
- ¹⁸Annual Report, Town of Norwood, 1913, p. 32.
- ¹⁹Acts of 1914, c. 197.
- ²⁰Acts of 1921, c. 400.
- ²¹Acts of 1920, c. 586.
- ²²Acts of 1920, c. 292.
- ²³Acts of 1947, c. 17.
- ²⁴Acts of 1929, c. 38.
- ²⁵Annual Report, Town of Greenfield, 1958, p. 12.
- ²⁶Acts of 1956, c. 571.
- ²⁷Acts of 1949, c. 247.
- ²⁸Acts of 1954, c. 620.
- ²⁹John Sly, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-205.
- ³⁰*Recent Council-Manager Developments and Directory of Council-Manager Cities*, International City Managers Association, Chicago, 1959, p. 18.
- ³¹*Christian Science Monitor*, January 6, 1925 as reported in Sly *op. cit.*, p. 206.
- ³²*Amherst Journal Record*, April 2, 1959.
- ³³Robert P. Bolan, *Handbook for Massachusetts Selectmen*, Bureau of Government Research, University of Massachusetts, 1956, p. 7.
- ³⁴General Laws, c. 41, s. 23A.
- ³⁵General Laws, c. 41, s. 32.
- ³⁶*Report of Town Manager Study Committee* (articles in the Warrant for Annual Town Meeting, Brookline, Massachusetts, March 27, 1951), p. 42.
- ³⁷Acts of 1956, c. 145.
- ³⁸J. Ward Carter, "New Trends in Town Administration," *The Massachusetts Selectmen*, XVII (April, 1958), p. 13.
- ³⁹*Bulletin*, Bureau of Government Research, University of Massachusetts (July, 1960), p. 4.

APPENDIX B

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APPENDIX C

TOWNS CLASSIFIED BY FORM

TABLE 1
TOWNS WITH MANAGER

	Population**	In Effect
1. Amherst	13,510	1954
2. Andover	17,149	1959
3. Arlington	49,711	1953
4. Concord	12,202	1956
5. Danvers	21,876	1950
6. Holden	10,129	1952
7. Ipswich*	8,529	1955
8. Mansfield	7,738	1921
9. Middleborough	11,034	1921
10. Norwood	24,930	1915
11. Provincetown	3,361	1954
12. Randolph	18,851	1955
13. Saugus	20,751	1948
14. Shrewsbury	16,757	1954
15. Stoughton	16,319	1922
16. Williamstown	7,288	1957
17. Wilmington	12,379	1951

*Town manager designated executive secretary.

**Population statistics taken from: 1960 *Census of Population, Preliminary Reports*, (Massachusetts). PC (P1)-23, G.P.O., Washington, D. C., August, 1960.

TABLE 2

**TOWNS WITH CONSOLIDATED DEPARTMENTS
OF PUBLIC WORKS**

Population		Population	
1. Agawam	15,711	20. Nahant	3,837
2. Amesbury	10,650	21. Natick	28,645
3. Andover	17,149	22. Needham	25,670
4. Arlington	49,711	23. North Andover	10,844
5. Athol	11,537	24. North Reading	8,194
6. Ayer	14,877	25. Norwood	24,930
7. Bedford	11,006	26. Reading	19,257
8. Billerica	17,912	27. Saugus	20,751
9. Canton	12,780	28. Sharon	10,052
10. Concord	12,202	29. Stoneham	17,917
11. Danvers	21,876	30. Stoughton	16,319
12. Dedham	23,835	31. Swampscott	13,175
13. East Longmeadow	10,254	32. Wakefield	24,294
14. Framingham	44,402	33. Walpole	14,053
15. Franklin	10,508	34. Wellesley	26,017
16. Hudson	9,632	35. Weymouth	48,023
17. Ipswich	8,529	36. Whitman	10,504
18. Lexington	27,836	37. Winchendon	6,180
19. Maynard	7,693		

TABLE 3
TOWNS WITH EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES

	Population
1. Adams	12,358
2. Brookline	53,351
3. Dracut	13,299
4. Wakefield	24,294
5. Wayland	10,384
6. Wellesley	26,017
7. Weston	8,258
8. Westwood	10,343
9. Winchester	19,434

Under consideration in the following towns:

1. Chelmsford	15,006
2. Greenfield	17,611
3. Natick	28,645
4. Reading	19,257
5. Sharon	10,052
5. Braintree	31,014

APPENDIX D

TABLE 1

CHRONOLOGY OF TOWN MANAGER ACTS INTRODUCED IN THE GENERAL COURT SINCE 1946

1946 — None
1947 — Saugus
1948 — Amesbury, Nahant
1949 — Danvers, Ipswich, Stoneham
1950 — Wilmington
1951 — Amherst, Holden, Swampscott
1952 — Arlington, Concord, Dedham
1953 — Provincetown, Scituate, Shrewsbury
1954 — Randolph
1955 — None
1956 — Andover, Williamstown
1957 — Barre, North Reading
1958 — None
1959 — None
1960 — Falmouth, Dedham, Southborough

TABLE 2

**CHRONOLOGY OF PUBLIC WORKS CONSOLIDATION
LEGISLATION INTRODUCED IN THE GENERAL COURT
SINCE 1946**

- 1946 — Dartmouth, combines sewers and water
- 1947 — None
- 1948 — Ayer, D. P. W.
 - Billerica, D. P. W. under selectmen
 - Canton, D. P. W. under selectmen
 - Fairhaven, sewers and water
 - Lynnfield, cemetery and park
 - Whitman, D. P. W.
- 1949 — Nahant, D. P. W. under selectmen
- 1950 — Bridgewater, water and sewers
 - Provincetown, D. P. W. under selectmen
 - Wakefield, D. P. W.
- 1951 — None
- 1952 — Maynard, D. P. W.
 - Plymouth, D. P. W.
 - Southborough, D. P. W.
- 1953 — Falmouth, sewers and water
 - Ware, sewers and water
- 1954 — Barnstable, D. P. W. under selectmen (1955 repealed)
 - North Andover, powers of D. P. W. increased
 - Sharon, D. P. W. under selectmen
- 1955 — None
- 1956 — None
- 1957 — Weymouth
- 1958 — None
- 1959 — Rockport, D. P. W.
 - Southborough, D. P. W. under selectmen
- 1960 — Foxborough, D. P. W.

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